

WHCOA Topic Area: The Workplace of the Future
Issue: Employment and Volunteerism

Overview of Current Issue Status: the US Census Bureau predicts the number of Americans 50+ will increase by 31 million by the year 2020 to a total of 118 million and the majority of workers age 50 to 70 say that they intend to work during retirement or never retire at all. Older Workers are valuable resources and help to maintain an experienced, skilled and competitive workforce, but may require work skills training or retraining, more flexible work options and employee benefits. Studies have shown that seniors who stay in the workforce have fewer health problems.

There are two leading federally supported programs that provide assistance to older workers, Title V of the Older Americans Act and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Challenges: Surveys show that sixty-five percent (65%) of Americans over age 65 believe that there are not enough job opportunities to achieve or maintain economic independence. Given the importance that older workers will play in the workforce and the needs to support a growing older population, the nation needs to take a comprehensive look at the impact of aging demographics on the workforce.

Resolution:

Include a provision under Title V of the Older Americans Act requiring a comprehensive study of current and future senior employment needs, focusing on the needs of lower-income seniors, and reinstating the exclusion of Social Security benefits when determining eligibility for Title V.

Ensure that such a study examines Title V, the Workforce Investment Act, all federal employment programs, and other public and private sector opportunities to create older-worker friendly practices and enforce age discrimination laws.

Enact federal and state policies to support the costs of training, retraining and retention of the older population to assure older worker participation in a variety of meaningful employment and relevant training programs.

Implement the results of the study to best promote and support the recruitment, training and retention of the growing ranks of older adults who wish to remain employed.

Take advantage and expand the capacity of existing expertise within the Aging Network to assist policymakers and communities in maximizing the economic potential of older workers.